

**The Department of Human Services
Bureau of Children and Family Services**



A Handbook for Parents

Child Protective Services: The Department of Human Services Child Protective Services program is a child-centered, family focused social service whose primary goal is to protect children who are reported to be abused or neglected. Another important goal is to support and assist parents so they may safely care for and protect their children. The Department works to meet these goals and keep children safe by providing services and support to children and families.

REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

The Report: Maine law says that anyone who suspects that a child is being abused or neglected must make a report to Department of Human Services. People who work with children and families are also required by law to make that report.

- A reporter may ask that his/her name not be shared. The Department will honor that request unless the reporter is required as a witness.
- When reports of suspected child abuse or neglect are made in good faith, reporters are immune from liability.

Intake: The Department has a 24-hour intake unit to receive reports of suspected child abuse and neglect.

- Intake workers receive the report and decide whether more information is needed.
- If more information is needed, this will be done by a caseworker from an office near where the child lives.

THE ASSESSMENT OF THE FAMILY

The Safety Assessment: Reports of suspected child abuse and neglect that need more information gathered are sent to the district office for the area in which the family lives. A caseworker will be assigned to gather more information.

The caseworker will:

- Contact the parent.
- Give the parents an opportunity to ask questions and get information. The parents or caregiver may choose not to speak with the caseworker.
- Continue with the assessment by contacting community professionals and others even if the parents do not choose to meet with or speak to the caseworker.
- Notify the parents of their intention to interview their child. (except when not required to-do so by law.)
- Decide at the end of the assessment whether the reported abuse and neglect is substantiated or unsubstantiated. Substantiated means that it was more likely than not that the abuse or neglect did happen.

Unsubstantiated reports of abuse and neglect: When the report of abuse and neglect has not been substantiated the parents will be told by the caseworker in writing.

- The Department will keep the unsubstantiated record for eighteen months.
- The Department shall destroy the record after eighteen months if there have been no new reports.

Substantiated reports of abuse or neglect: When the report of abuse and neglect has been substantiated the parents will be told by the caseworker in writing. The letter must also notify the parents of their right to request a review of the decision and how to request that review.

Safety Plan:

If a child is found to be abused or neglected and is unsafe:

- the parents will be helped to make a safety plan for the child.
- the caseworker will review the completed plan with the parents to make certain it will keep the child safe.
- the Department may provide supports and services to the family.

If a parents chooses not to follow the safety plan for their child or if the plan will not keep the child safe the caseworker will consider what

actions, including Court intervention, may be necessary. The Department may not remove a child from their home without showing the court that the child(ren) is in immediate risk of serious harm and obtaining a Court Order

Ongoing Needs: After the safety plan is put in place the caseworker will continue to work with the family to understand why the abuse and neglect is present in the family.

The caseworker and the family will develop a plan that will:

- identify the areas that need to be addressed to stop the abuse and neglect.
- identify the services that will address the abuse and neglect.
- be reviewed by the caseworker and the family every three months.

Types of Services that have been helpful to Parents:

Child Protective Assessment and Services

Day Care

Counseling for parents and children

Homemakers

Substance Abuse Treatment

Family Violence Programs

Temporary Shelters for teens

Crisis Services

Parenting Education

Public Health Nursing

Help with housing and other living expenses

Transportation

Parents rights:

To know:

- The nature of the reported child abuse and neglect.
 - How the assessment will be done and how long it will take.
 - The suspected harm or risk of harm to the child.
 - What the caseworker has found regarding the reported child abuse and neglect.
 - What could happen as a result of the child protective assessment.
 - What action the Department may take, if any.
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- To request to review their record.

- To have relatives be given priority consideration for placement of the child out of the home.

The Child's Rights

- Safety and Supervision
- Shelter, food, clothing
- Protection from physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect.
- Diagnosis and treatment of medical and emotional conditions
- To visit and be visited by parents and/or brothers and sisters when the child is in DHS custody when the visits are in the child's best interest.
- To have a person called a guardian *ad litem* appointed by the court to look after the child's best interest if the case goes to court.

Parent's Rights if the Department goes to court:

Parents have the right to:

- have an attorney to represent them in court.
- to be told about any legal action involving their child.
- be offered services for the problems of child abuse and neglect.
- have a clear and understandable written plan for services to help stop the abuse and neglect.
- visit with their child as long as the visits remain in the child's best interest.

Non-Discrimination Notice

In accordance with state and federal Civil Rights laws, the Maine Department of Human Services does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, national origin, disability or age in admission or access to or treatment or employment in its programs and activities. Inquiries concerning the application of these regulations and the grievance procedures for resolution of complaints alleging discrimination may be referred to the Affirmative Action Coordinator at 221 State Street, Augusta, Maine 04333, (207) 287-3488 (voice) or 1-800-332-1003 (TDD), or the Assistant Secretary of the Office of Civil Rights, Washington, D.C.

District Offices

Cumberland County

161 Marginal Way, Portland 04101

Tel. 822-2231 (1-800-482-7520) Deaf/Hearing Impaired TTY: 822-2293

York County

208 Graham Street, Biddeford 04005

Tel. 286-2508 (1-800-322-1919) Deaf/Hearing Impaired TTY: 286-2402

39 St. Ignatius Street, Sanford 04073

Tel. 490-5444 (1-800-482-0790) Deaf/Hearing Impaired TTY: 490-5466

Androscoggin, Franklin and Oxford Counties

200 Main Street, Lewiston 04240

Tel. 795-4620 (1-800-482-7517) Deaf/Hearing Impaired TTY: 795-4595

243 Main Street, South Paris 04281

Tel. 744-1215 (1-888-593-9775) Deaf/Hearing Impaired TTY: 744-1224

Kennebec and Sagadahoc Counties

35 Anthony Avenue, Augusta 04333

Tel. 624-8222 (1-800-452-1926) Deaf/Hearing Impaired TTY: 624-5551

Lincoln, Knox, and Waldo Counties

360 Old County Road, Rockland 04841

Tel. 596-4262 (1-800-432-7802) Deaf/Hearing Impaired TTY: 596-4201

Somerset County

98 North Avenue, Suite 10, Skowhegan 04976

Tel. 474-4850 (1-800-452-4602) Deaf/Hearing Impaired TTY: 474-4891

Penobscot and Piscataquis Counties

396 Griffin Road, Bangor 04401

Tel. 561-4220 (1-800-432-7825) Deaf/Hearing Impaired TTY: 561-4403

Hancock County

17 Eastward Lane, Ellsworth 04605

Tel. 667-1625 (1-800-432-7823) Deaf/Hearing Impaired TTY: 667-1639

Washington County

13 Prescott Drive, Machias 04654

Tel. 255-2024 (1-800-432-7846) Deaf/Hearing Impaired TTY: 255-6866

Aroostook County

11 High Street, Houlton 04730

Tel. 532-5106 (1-800-432-7338) Deaf/Hearing Impaired TTY: 532-5001

14 Access Highway, Caribou 04736

Tel. 493-4140 (1-800-432-7366) Deaf/Hearing Impaired TTY: 493-4034

92 Market Street, Fort Kent 04743

Tel. 834-7720 (1-800-432-7340) Deaf/Hearing Impaired TTY: 834-7702

Statewide Child Protective Intake 1-800-452-1999

Deaf/Hearing Impaired: TTY: 1-800-963-9490

Your caseworker's name is _____

You can reach your caseworker at _____

Your caseworker's supervisor is _____